

# DAILY TRIAGE SYSTEM

5 MIN PER SESSION · 10 SESSIONS ACROSS ONE WEEK

**Objective.** Run AI through one capture surface (inbox, notes, scratchpad) twice a day for a week, sorting items into four options, and surfacing the highest-priority next action.

## CONCEPTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **Triage is judgment with structure.** AI doesn't make the call — it forces you to label every item, which is the work most people avoid.
- **Four options, not five.** Big step / Little step / Keep / Delete. More categories = decision fatigue.
- **The “next priority” call surfaces what matters.** After labeling, AI proposes one priority. You override it if needed; the proposal alone breaks the freeze.
- **Twice a day is the minimum cadence.** Once a day = backlog grows between runs. Twice keeps the surface light.
- **Volume of “Delete” is the most useful signal.** It's the quiet measure of how much noise you've been carrying.

## SCENARIO

You have at least one place where stray items pile up — an inbox you don't fully clear, a notes app, a scratchpad, a Slack DM with yourself. Today you set up the triage prompt; this week you live with it.

## SOURCE MATERIAL

Pick **one capture surface** to start. Don't try to triage three at once.

- Personal inbox (work or personal) — stuff you haven't actioned but haven't archived
- A notes app where stray ideas land
- A scratchpad / `.txt` file you dump into during the day
- A specific Slack channel that piles up

## PROMPTS TO TRY

---

**The triage prompt** (your reusable template):

[Context] I'm running a twice-a-day triage on my [capture surface]. I want every item sorted into one of four options, then a single highest-priority next action surfaced.

[Specific Details]

Items currently sitting on the surface:

1. [item – paste subject line, snippet, or a one-line description]
2. [item]
3. [item]

[... up to all of them]

[Intent] For each item, return ONE of these labels and a one-line rationale:

1. **Big step** – a meaningful next action that would take more than 5 min and matters this week
2. **Little step** – a quick under-5-minute task to clear it
3. **Keep in [location]** – file it, no action needed
4. **Delete** – not worth holding

After labeling all items, return ONE recommended next action: the single highest-leverage thing on this list to do *now*. Pick from the Big Step or Little Step categories only.

[Desired Format]

A table:

| # | Item (1-line) | Label | Rationale |
|---|---------------|-------|-----------|
|---|---------------|-------|-----------|

Then, below the table, the recommended next action with one sentence on why.

[Constraints]

- If an item is ambiguous, default to "Little step" or ask me one clarifying question. Don't guess.
- "Keep" must include where to file it. "Delete" must be confident – if it's borderline, choose "Keep" instead.
- The recommended next action cannot be a meta-task ("review your inbox") – it must be a concrete thing.

**Override pattern** — when AI's pick isn't right:

Override: [reason – e.g., "the recommended next action requires waiting on someone else; pick the next-best one I can act on alone"]

**End-of-week pattern** — Friday only:

This week I ran 10 triage sessions on [surface]. The labels distributed roughly: [count Big / Little / Keep / Delete]. What does that distribution tell you about my workload shape, and what should I change next week?

## DELIVERABLE

---

By Friday:

1. Your finalized triage prompt template, saved
2. Three-bullet retro:
  - **Surprise** — what you noticed about your work that you didn't expect (often the Delete count, sometimes the Little Step backlog)
  - **Change** — one thing you'd modify in the prompt for next week
  - **Keep going?** — yes/no/modified, with one line on why

## SIGNS OF SUCCESS

---

- You ran it at least 8 times in 7 days. (Two skipped sessions is normal; more than that means the cadence is wrong, not the prompt.)
- The Delete column held a real count by midweek. The cleanup happened.
- At least once, the recommended next action was something you would *not* have picked on your own — and turned out to be right.
- You can name your workload shape (“mostly little steps,” “all big steps stacking up,” “I’m drowning in Keep”) in one sentence by Friday.
- You either keep it as is, modify the prompt, or kill it on purpose. Any of those three is a successful outcome.

***Deliverable.*** Your finalized triage prompt template plus a 3-bullet end-of-week retro.